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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON THE VISIT OF SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
DONALD H. RUMSFELD TO HONDURAS, AUGUST 20, 2003

1. Editorial in Tegucigalpa-based liberal daily "La Tribuna" on 8/23 entitled "Thanks". "President Maduro made an opportune clarification stating that it was absolutely false that Honduras is getting prepared to install another U.S. military base in our territory, which will be supposedly used to fight against narcotrafficking. According to Maduro, the U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld came for a very simple reason: to thank the Honduran people for our support by sending troops for the pacification and reconstruction of Iraq, and there was nothing else."

"Since we are very skeptical, there is a lot of people who believe that such an important visitor doesn't bother to come to a country like Honduras just to give thanks, that there must be a hidden agenda for his visit. There have been several theories about the presence of Rumsfeld here in Honduras, especially when we were the only Central American country he visited. Even though the governmental authorities have repeatedly explained the purpose of his visit, there are still many people wondering, why did Rumsfeld come to Honduras?."

2. Editorial in San Pedro Sula-based liberal daily "Tiempo" on 8/23 entitled "Thank you, very much". "We don't really know the real purpose of the visit of the U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to Honduras after he went to Colombia. Then, we should try to be satisfied with the official explanation that Rumsfeld came to thank the Maduro government for sending Honduran troops to help the British-American occupation armies in Iraq."

"This expression of gratitude is truly extraordinary because we had already been visited by the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, who also came to Honduras to thank us. So, as we say, this much gratitude is getting confusing."

"However, we can't avoid using our imagination. Some people - ourselves included - have seen a relationship between the visit of Secretary Rumsfeld to Colombia and Honduras with the internal conflict in this South American country and its links with drug trafficking, and President Bush's war against terrorism."

Palmer